

where they have none but the chief shepherd to guide them. More may be from time to time added to the fold.—Few can sympathise, perhaps, with the anxieties of the preacher who has thus a random message to deliver, and who knows not if the arrow winged at a venture will take effect. If he go forth in simplicity, however, and speak in sincerity, no doubt God will bless and honour his own message. The parties who can thus but occasionally attend upon a preached gospel should value those opportunities which they have all the more highly, or at least improve them all the more anxiously. That word which they hear is the only message which by the preacher they are to have addressed to them as from God himself for some time. How should it be prized! How should it be listened to! And when they take to their homes again, and when several Sabbaths are to intervene ere another opportunity come round, and they are left to their own resources and to God, and the Sabbath is to brood with outspread wing over silent sanctuaries, and the purer and stiller air is to witness to its being Sabbath only by the testimony of the silent heart which recognizes the Lord's day, the word which has been last heard should be well pondered, should be the food of meditation till the next season of meeting arrives; and the Bible should be read at home, and private meditation and prayer should supply the place of the exercises of God's house. It will certainly be a sad thing if weeks are allowed to pass, and the word of God is never had recourse to, and an occasional address from God's servants is all that is depended upon for the food of the soul for, it may be, long seasons together. One could envy the opportunity which some have in those silent spots, with nothing but the blue sky above them, and nature around them, to hold communion with God, and to invite the meditations which such scenes are so well calculated to inspire. A Sabbath may be turned to good account in this way in the absence of a stated regular ministry among a people. Religious works of approved writers may be helps to the Bible, and may convey much instruction and delight to the mind that has a taste for them. The Sabbath should not be spent in idleness, and should never be a weariness. A throne of grace is in all places accessible: God may be in every place: the minister of the true sanctuary is ever carrying on

his work: and every thing may be a preacher to the listening heart. A stated ministry, however, in situations convenient to include a sufficient population around, should be aimed at. Missionary work is but a substitute for a stated ministry of the gospel. The Apostles abode for years in one place, and they ordained elders, and among these preaching or teaching elders, in every church. They set in order the churches, and one thing which they did in connexion with that order, was to ordain those elders who should take the oversight among them. Paul called the elders of the church of Ephesus together, and exhorted them to feed the church of God which he had purchased with his blood. A faithful pastor residing among a people has the happiest effect, in the tie which binds them together, in the reciprocal relation in which they stand to each other, and in the daily household influence which he brings to bear on his flock, as well as the stated ministrations from the pulpit, when he is called to speak to his people as from God. Every minister is to be an overseer: he is called by this very name; and his office is for this very work. It is implied, therefore, that there be a stated ministry among a people by one who can take the oversight of their souls, and feed the flock of God. He is not to be a passing messenger merely—a flying angel. He is to be the angel of the church. Possessing the confidence and affection of his people he will be able to exercise all the more salutary influence among them. He will get more into their hearts, and his words will have more power. He will be near at the call of sickness or distress—to sympathise in affliction—to minister consolation in sorrow—to be a friend and adviser in every difficulty—and to smoothe the bed of death—to speak words of comfort even then—be with his people even to the margin of that river into which they are to enter alone. Meanwhile, the best that can be done is to be done; and people should be looking forward with hope to the time when they will have a minister of their own, to bear rule and break the bread of life among them. Means should not be grudged for upholding what so far supplies the present necessity. These should rather be enlarged, that, as the field is wide, it may be overtaken. Those who supply the stations have much pleasure in doing so; and it will be their greatest reward if they are made the instruments of good